



News Release

For Immediate Release:
Thursday, January 15, 2009
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Utah African-Americans/Blacks Face Health Challenges *New UDOH report first of several to discuss minority health*

(Salt Lake City, UT) – New data show that Utah’s African-American and Black communities lag behind whites and other Utahns in critical health measures, including prenatal care, infant mortality, and health insurance coverage.

The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) Center for Multicultural Health report, Utah Health Disparities Summary 2009: African-American/Black, is the first in a series of brief reports that discuss Utah racial and ethnic minority health. Major challenges for the African-American/Black community are:

- 1 in 5 African-American/Blacks are uninsured compared to 1 in 9 Utahns overall.
- 15.7% have no usual source of health care compared to 9.8% in Utah overall.
- 47% lack adequate prenatal care. Overall, 18.6% of Utah women report inadequate prenatal care.
- An infant death rate of 10.6 per 1,000 live births, compared to 4.4 per 1,000 overall.
- 14.1% of babies are born preterm. The overall Utah rate is 9.5%.
- 10.5% of babies are low birth weight compared to 6.8 percent overall.
- At 22.0%, the smoking rate is twice the overall Utah rate of 11.1%.

But the picture is not all bad. The data also show important strengths unique to the groups, who make up 2 percent of the Utah population

- Coronary heart disease and cancer death rates are lower than among U.S. African-American/Blacks and meet state and national targets.
- Fewer African-American/Black Utahns report problems from poor physical health than the general state population.

“I’m extremely pleased with the development and release of this targeted health summary,” said Betty Sawyer, director of the Harambee African American Tobacco and

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Health Network. “The information will be a valuable tool to assist state and local health departments and other health professionals in not only understanding African-American health indicators, but more importantly, incorporating them into targeted service delivery prioritizations.”

In the coming weeks, UDOH will release reports on the state’s four other prominent racial/ethnic groups—Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino, Asian and American Indian. Planned release dates are Jan. 28, Feb. 11, Feb. 25, and March 11, respectively.

“Creating a unique report for each racial and ethnic group has started a dialogue between health department employees and minority community members about these health inequities,” said April Young Bennett, UDOH Multicultural Health Specialist. “In addition, our research has helped reveal the health issues that these communities consider priorities and also uncovered areas where we need to provide more data in the future,” she added.

The 4-page reports distill the latest data about these racial and ethnic populations in an easy-to-read format. An insert supplements the report with a list of resources to help community members address health problems. All Utah Health Disparities Summaries will be available by National Minority Health Month in April.

For more information, see the complete report at

<http://health.utah.gov/cmh/data/disparitiessummary/blackfactsheet.pdf>.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.